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Strings On The Winds

Taliesyn map Avaon

And it came to pass that into this time of great turmoil, there came a man clad simply and carrying unto himself little else than a harp, the likes of which I have yet to see. His name was Ahrian and he made known that he was Bard. He went unto the house of a village elder, asked lodging, and was granted it. There he stayed and he sang from the green and played the songs which drifted into the air as if they were the air itself.

One afternoon I made to inquire of him his whereabouts and what was Bard. He said unto me: 'You speak little else to me but nonsense. Speak clearly and I shall answer as I can.'

He took the harp into his lap. 'What then is your trade?'

'I am Bard. Mine is the way of music, song, and tale. In this lies my being.'

'Then you are a minstrel or story-teller?'

'I am both and neither. I am minstrel and story-teller in what I do, but I am Bard in what I am.'

'I do not understand.'

'Then listen and I shall make it known to you. Music lies at the base of the world. It is magick in itself, and it contains other things that are it's nature. I am Bard and bound to the music, as it is my existence. I work the music as a fine silversmith works the silver into a cup. So I work the music into a fine remembrance of the past. Or time hence. Or man and woman present. So the music works for me and does my bidding, as I in turn do its bidding in the working.'

'You speak of magick as the music and music as the magick. Which is it then? Is music the cause of the magick, or is magick the cause of the music?'

'Both are true. In playing the song I am working in the magick, and in working in the magick I am drawn to work a song. Such is my call.'

'What of tales then?'

'They are great and beauteous. In splendor they cannot be equaled, for the Gods run through them as the maids run through fields of grass in the Spring.'

'What Gods are these of which you speak?'

'All Gods to some, and none to others. It is as you see. And then it is as it is.'

'What of these do you worship?'

'I worship none and I worship all. I worship not, and devoutly pray unto the Muses. Mine is not the way of the zealot, but of the song.'

'How then do you work your magick if the Gods are not yours?'

'Ahh, but they are mine. I do not see the Gods as they appear to others, but as they are in the song of a bird in summer, or a stream in the Spring. My magick is not of them, but is them of their essence. It aids them to survive and pierces their nature as the light pierces the darkness.'

And so I bid him let me rest, that I might ponder and inquire further on the morrow. As I left him, I heard a sweet melody drift into the hollows

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In this age of rebirth for many of the ways of the Craft, it has often come to my attention that there is not a similar revival of the Bardic arts in force. However, as we move into a New Age, it is distressing to see so few wielding the candle to light the path. Thus armed with this dearth of those practicing the Bardic Way, I have decided to set forth some illumination into the subject of Bardism.

In the classical concept, the Bard was many things: a musician, a songster, a story-teller, a historian, a collector of lore both magickal and mundane. He also served the community in announcing through his arts the coming Circles. However, should he attend this Circle, he would be little else than a minion of the Watchtower's guardians.

Of all these things, I must point out that he was a magickal individual, whose concerns tended not towards ritual, but application. His song was his work of magick, and could either be loving and compassionate or cold and harsh as the case warranted. He was restricted in many ways in the expression of his duties inherent in the office and title he carried. The title 'Bard' was (and is) worn with pride for it was a religious indication and a general term for a way of life.

This introduction leaves us with one nagging question: What is the Bard of today? It is this question that I shall address in full in coming articles. Each will contain a conversation with Ahrian (an actual 15th century Scots Bard) and a discussion of the concepts involved. Later, I will include samples of the Bard's art by my hand and that of Seamus Myrick, an Irish Bard I know personally.

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Quote of the moment:

Smile, and the whole world thinks you're laughing at them.

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